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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Tuesday December 21, 1976

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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Tuesday December 21, 1976.

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ISRAEL: Political Tactics

- 25X1 [] Israeli Prime Minister Rabin's decision to resign and force an early national election--possibly in April or May--is likely to arrest a decline in his popular standing and strengthen his shaky position within the Labor Party, at least in the short run. Rabin will now try to secure broad Labor Party backing for his continued leadership and to place his stamp on the party's election campaign platform at its convention in late February.
- 25X1 [] Although party conservatives and some moderates had been leaning toward the more hawkish Defense Minister Peres, they are likely to unite behind Rabin rather than precipitate a bitter and possibly suicidal leadership struggle. Peres, who was caught by surprise along with everyone else, will probably shelve his drive for the leadership rather than risk the onus of causing Labor to lose its 28-year hold on power by challenging Rabin now.
- 25X1 [] If Rabin succeeds in rallying the party around him, he is likely to seek a moderate plank on Middle East peace negotiations in the party platform. He apparently would like to have a plank sufficiently vague to mollify party conservatives, yet moderate enough in tone to satisfy Labor doves and Labor's left-wing coalition partner, the Mapam Party, which controls seven seats in parliament.
- 25X1 [] Mapam leaders have been threatening for months to break with the Labor Party and run their own slate of candidates in the next election unless Labor adopts a more explicitly dovish position on peace negotiations. Mapam is doubtless pleased by Rabin's decision to oust the conservative National Religious Party from the governing coalition and is probably ready to support Rabin if he makes some reassuring gesture.
- 25X1 [] By adopting a moderate stance, Rabin may also calculate that Labor can win back support among moderate splinter groups, independents and disgruntled Labor supporters who appear to be turning increasingly to Yigael Yadin's new Democratic Movement Party. Yadin's party, according to a recent public opinion poll, has already made serious inroads into Labor's strength and could win as many as 12 seats in parliament if an election were held now.

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[] Rabin's actions have clearly put Labor's main opponent, the conservative Likud bloc, on the defensive for the moment. Should his gamble misfire, however, he risks losing the initiative to Likud. Significant gains by Likud in the election could force Labor into a national unity government that would tie its hands on peace negotiations with the Arabs.

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[] The National Religious Party is almost certain to turn more to the right now in search of political allies and could well link up with Likud. The party's moderate old-guard leadership would be reluctant to establish more than a tactical working relationship with Likud, but the militant young faction is likely to press hard for a formal alliance--possibly even a merger of the two groups--especially if Rabin begins to falter.

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[] Such an alliance at present would control at least 44 of the 120 seats in the Knesset and might attract the Free Center Party, with four seats, and the supporters of the hawkish General Ariel Sharon, who has a small popular following of his own. Labor and Mapam now hold 53 seats.

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[] Out of the government, the National Religious Party may also feel less hesitant about backing the efforts of the radically right-wing Gush Emunim movement to establish Jewish settlements all over the occupied West Bank. Such action would provoke serious Arab demonstrations there that could be politically embarrassing to Rabin's government and possibly complicate his position in future Middle East peace talks. []

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VIETNAM: Party Congress

[] Vietnam has concluded its week-long party congress apparently without any major surprises. Most top party leaders gave long speeches, but we are only now receiving the texts. Press coverage of the congress suggests that the speakers hewed closely to well-established policy lines.

[] Hanoi's continuing problems with its close communist neighbors were clearly underscored by the absence of any representative from Cambodia and China's perfunctory greeting to the congress. The Soviets and the Laotians, on the other hand, were given special treatment. Party leader Le Duan met with these two delegations, leaving the hosting of other foreign party representatives to lower ranking officials.

[] Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong delivered a long report on the country's second five-year plan. Agriculture will apparently be emphasized, but industry is still to get the largest investment. The Premier is reported to have acknowledged that the plan includes large population relocations--both from urban to rural areas and between the north and the south.

[] Le Duan is reported as saying that there will be some expulsions from the party at the rank-and-file level. The

congress changed the name of the party from a workers party to a communist party, and broadened the Politburo to include veterans from the military, the economy, and the party in the south.

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[] The leadership at the very top is largely unchanged, although military hero Vo Nguyen Giap slipped another notch in the hierarchy, as he did at the last congress. One other Politburo member, Hoang Van Hoan, has been dropped altogether, an unusual move for the Vietnamese. Normally those who fall into disfavor are lowered in the hierarchy and allowed to keep a place on the Central Committee.

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[] More than a dozen of the old committee members and many of the alternates have been dropped. Although death, particularly in the war years since the last congress in 1960, may account for some of these disappearances, many of those who failed to be reappointed may well have been dismissed.

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[] The new Central Committee is more than double the size of the old one. []

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KENYA: Succession Issue

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[] Opponents of Kenyan Vice President Moi are determined to make sure he does not succeed President Kenyatta, despite the failure of their campaign last October to divest Moi of his constitutional role as interim successor. The anti-Moi forces undoubtedly feel a sense of urgency in view of Kenyatta's advanced age--about 86--and his fragile health.

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[] //The infighting is likely to intensify in the months ahead. Moi's adversaries are motivated by personal ambition and a distrust of the Vice President, who is a member of the Kalenjin tribal grouping. Members of the Kikuyu tribe, from which Kenyatta comes, want to keep the presidency in their own hands.//

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[] Constitutionally, Moi would assume the presidency for a 90-day period in the event of Kenyatta's death. The constitution also states that an election is to be held during that period, provided that at least two presidential candidates have been nominated by different political parties. In the absence of another party, the candidate of the Kenya African National Union, currently the country's only legal party, would be declared president.

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[] As matters now stand, Moi would be in a good position during an interim presidency to take control of the party structure and obtain KANU's nomination. This has not been lost on Moi's rivals; they have tried to convince Kenyatta to revitalize the party structure, which has deteriorated over the last several years. Except for the party presidency, held by Kenyatta, senior offices have largely fallen vacant.

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[] Local party elections are currently under way, however. Both Moi and the Kikuyu establishment are apparently working hard to get their loyalists elected. Senior party officers will be elected at next year's meeting of the annual delegates' conference. The new party vice president would be virtually assured of controlling the party and gaining its presidential nomination on Kenyatta's death.

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[] Kenyatta, jealous of his authority, has refused to single out a political heir. Moi has fallen into disfavor with Kenyatta in recent years and has been shorn of some of his responsibilities.

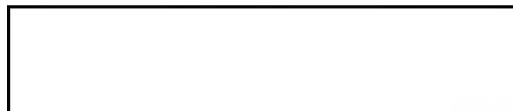
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[] The President could remove Moi from the succession by dismissing him from the Kenyan vice presidency, an appointive post. Kenyatta could then name another vice president or leave the post vacant with the choice of an interim successor in the hands of the Kikuyu-dominated cabinet.

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[] In the past, however, Kenyatta has preferred to avoid firing senior officials, and instead has chosen to provoke their resignations with obvious slights and snubs. Kenyatta has given no indication that he plans a further demotion for the Vice President, and Moi, for his part, does not appear inclined to step down voluntarily.

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[redacted] The efforts to remove Moi as constitutional successor have brought to the surface long-standing rivalries. We have no firm evidence that either side is planning to take matters into its own hands, but this could change in view of the high stakes, the determination of both camps, and the fragile state of Kenyatta's health. [redacted]

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